



Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

## Off-Leash Area Working Group

July 16, 2010, 9:00 am  
Room 222- City Hall  
Meeting Minutes



Robert J. DeRubeis  
Commissioner

**Attending:** Susan Albright, *Alderman*, Bob DeRubeis, *P & R Commissioner*, Amy Koel, *DOLAC Chairman*, Carol Schein, *P & R Recreation*, Lee McIntyre, *Citizen Representative*, Janet Ruttenberg, *Intern*

**Absent:** Candace Havens, *Interim Planning Director*, Wally Bernheimer, *P & R Commission*, Ralph Torres, *Animal Control Officer*, Ted Kuklinski. *Citizen Representative*

**Also Attending:** Harry Sanders

### 1. Ordinance – Update

- ☛ The revised ordinance was moved out of the Programs & Services Committee with a vote 4-0-2 - Sangiolo and Merrill abstaining. The ordinance will go before the full Board of Alderman on August 9.

### 2. Review & discuss information requested by Commission, fencing, fees, professional dog walkers, etc.

- ☛ Mr. McIntyre recommended the group work on the information requested by the P & R Commission; fees, restricted hours, park usage.
- ☛ Commissioner DeRubeis agreed and suggested the group request an August meeting with the P & R Commission. All in attendance agreed.
- ☛ Commissioner DeRubeis commented he had received a call from the Boston Globe. One of the questions the reporter asked was if the Commissioner would be the person to resolve all issues in the off leash areas and what kind of impact will the additional off leash areas have on the animal control officer. Commissioner DeRubeis explained the revised ordinance gives the Commissioner the authority to resolve any issues regarding the off leash areas. Commissioner DeRubeis also explained the areas will have a citizen representative and will include self policing.
- ☛ Mr. McIntyre stated a fee structure for residents and dog walkers, utilizing different colored dog tags would be helpful with self policing in the off leash areas.
- ☛ Alderman Albright stated the Town of Needham has formed a committee to discuss fees for professional dog walkers. The fees charged for the use of Newton off leash areas should go towards the care & maintenance of the off leash areas. More research is required on fees for professional dog walkers by surrounding cities and towns.
- ☛ Ms. Koel recommended speaking with the Animal Control Officer before presenting the licensing/self-policing recommendation to the Commission.
- ☛ Mr. McIntyre inquired how to handle fees for people who come from out of town to use the off leash areas. Ms. Koel suggested a guest pass.
- ☛ Ms. Ruttenberg stated off leash areas have a greater potential of disturbing wildlife. Fencing is important to consider for these areas. Different tags to access these areas would make it easier to detect fee compliance.
- ☛ Mr. McIntyre stated fencing is not necessary. Fencing is expensive and inhibits multiuse of an area. Fencing can also attract irresponsible dog owners, as it did in Brookline.
- ☛ Commissioner DeRubeis stated fencing will be considered on a case by case basis. Multiuse is important. Ms. Schein stated fencing also created extra maintenance in the area due to surfacing issues, i.e.; dust and mud.
- ☛ Commissioner DeRubeis asked the group how the fees would be implemented and managed.

- ❧ Ms. Koel stated the fees could be processed through the City Clerk office, the same as the dog licenses. Self-policing at the park would assist with compliance.
- ❧ Ms. Schein inquired if the tags would be worn by the dogs or by the people. In Arlington the dog owners wear placards.
- ❧ Commissioner DeRubeis stated some people will always try to beat the system no matter what process we put in place. Alderman Albright agreed.
- ❧ Mr. McIntyre requested the group begin discussion on hours, fencing and other restrictions at Claflin Park, McGrath Park and Old Cold Spring Park to prepare for the August Commission meeting. Mr. McIntyre also inquired if two additional off leash sites were going to be proposed to the Commission. Cabot Park was previously suggested, the temporary construction fence is working well as an off leash area and the users have mentioned they would be willing to pay for a permanent fence. Commissioner DeRubeis stated, due to the construction being done in the area of Cabot Park, the park should not be brought forward at this time. Also an area in a different Ward should be brought forward. Commissioner DeRubeis suggested Hunnewell Park, the members in attendance agreed.
- ❧ Claflin Park
- ❧ Commissioner DeRubeis stated a time restriction should be implemented at Claflin Park due to the early morning Cabot School bus stop and the afternoon NNHS athletics practice of javelin, discus and hammer throwing. The hours of operation for the off leash area should be 9am-3pm.
- ❧ Alderman Albright stated for safety reasons javelin, discus and hammer throwing should not be practiced in a public park.
- ❧ Ms. Schein stated one of the concerns at Claflin Park was people parking at the top of the hill by the condos. Commissioner DeRubeis stated the entrances can be limited. Mr. McIntyre stated access is important to how well the site will work as an off leash area.
- ❧ Mr. Sanders asked why Claflin Park was originally recommended and not Cabot Park. Ms. Schein replied areas that required fencing were removed as options from the first round of proposals.
- ❧ Alderman Albright stated there needs to be restrictions at Claflin Park for sledding and recommended no off leash dogs in Claflin Park from December 15- March 15. Mr. McIntyre stated that will work, as long as there are other off leash areas open.
- ❧ Mr. Sanders asked what about dog owners who allow a dog in the area while dragging the leash. Commissioner DeRubeis stated on leash dogs cannot be restricted from public parks, but the owners will be ticketed if caught off leash.
  - *Claflin Park Summary*
    - Restricted hours –
      - Open 9am-3pm
      - Closed December 15-March 15 for sledding season
    - Clearly defined access points
- ❧ McGrath Park
- ❧ Commissioner DeRubeis stated no time restrictions are required at McGrath Park. The proposed off leash area is a non use area. Parking will be impacted during soccer games; however, there are over 60 P & R Department parking spaces. The proposed area is a small space, only a few off leash dogs will be in the area at one time. Parking for the off leash area can be restricted to the P & R parking spaces. Parking on weekends will be the main issue.
- ❧ Mr. McIntyre stated the attendance of professional dog walkers is down at OCSP, the dog walkers do not want to aggravate the situation. If professional dog walkers know an area is controversial they will go somewhere else.
  - *McGrath Park Summary*
    - No time restrictions
    - Parking spaces clearly defined
- ❧ Old Cold Spring Park
- ❧ Commissioner DeRubeis stated there has not been a community meeting for Old Cold Spring Park due to the request of the Commission for additional information from OLAWG
- ❧ Mr. McIntyre stated the group should hear the publics concerns before creating restrictions. The one restriction previously discussed, for Old Cold Spring Park, was restricted use during permitted events.

- ❧ Ms. Koel inquired how much permitting is done at Old Cold Spring Park. Commissioner DeRubeis stated he does not believe there is a lot of permitted activity, but he will check. Ms. Koel inquired if the Commissioner sees an increase in permitted use which would decrease the use as the off leash area. Commissioner DeRubeis stated no. Alderman Albright asked on what grounds does permit use increase and dog use decrease.
- ❧ Mr. McIntyre stated parking will be an issue with increases permitted events, currently there are complaints of buses being parked on Beverly and Dunklee Road for permitted events.
- ❧ Commissioner DeRubeis stated all park users would have to co-exist, permitted event participants and the off leash area users.
- ❧ Ms. Ruttenberg commented she has been at Cold Spring Park, collecting data, and she has not seen any off leash dogs on the trails.

### **3. 07-23-10 Meeting Agenda**

- ❧ Continued discussion on information to be presented to the P & R Commission on 08-23-10.
- ❧ Update from Ms. Ruttenberg – Observations at Claflin Park, McGrath Park, Old Cold Spring Park and Hunnewell Park.

Respectfully submitted,

*Robin McLaughlin, Secretary*